

The Olympic flame illuminates hopes for peace and friendship

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Olympia, April 17 (PL)-- The Olympic flame that will give light at the Paris Games to the hopes of peace and friendship was lit on Tuesday in the emblematic Greek town of Olympia, precursor of the event under the five rings.

Greek actress Mary Mina lit in her role as high priestess the torch that will travel through Greece before embarking on April 26 aboard the three-masted sailing ship Belem bound for France, with the arrival

scheduled for May 8 in the Old Port of Marseille.

With the ruins of the Temple of Hera as a witness, the ceremony evoking ancient Greece began with the Olympic, French (La Marseillaise) and local anthems, followed by the words of the mayor of Olympia, Aristidis Planagotopoulos.

Other speeches continued the long-awaited ceremony, including those of the president of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, and Tony Estanguet, president of the Organizing Committee of the Paris-2024 Games, which will have their Olympic edition from July 26 to August 11 and the Paralympic edition from August 28 to September 8.

Bach issued a message of peace and assured that the summer event in the City of Light, which hosted it in 1900 and 1924, will be "a great symbol of human excellence and unity in the diversity of the world".

For his part, Mr. Estanguet described the Olympic flame as a symbol of humanity, a disseminator of tolerance and the values of sport.

France is ready, see you in Paris," he said.

After the speeches, the high priestess, torch in hand, proceeded to light the flame, in a ritual that included a sacred text and a choreography performed by her companions in the performance.

Greek Olympic champion Stéfanos Ntouskos, rowing starter at the Tokyo-2020 Games, will be the first bearer, handing the torch to France's Laure Manaudou, swimming champion at Athens-2004.

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